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The Greenwich Handicraft School has taught our Italian and Irish citizens to make the lace of their old homes in good designs. Under the superintendence of Mrs. Ernberg, a flax wheel and loom were installed in the gallery, and the art of spinning and weaving demonstrated from time to time.

Messrs. Lamb, Ascherman, and Burdick deserve the commendation of the public for the very attractive arrangement of the galleries, which were subdivided into sections by the use of columns, carbels, etc., demonstrating the availability of the galleries of the National Arts Club for technical exhibitions.

THE SPIRIT OF A PEOPLE MANIFESTED IN THEIR ART *

BY THOMAS NELSON PAGE

PART I

THAT the spirit of a people is manifested in their art will be apparent to any one, on a moment's reflection, who recalls how absolutely limited we are in our knowledge of the great peoples of the past, to the fragments of their art which have been left after the inroads of Time and the invasion of enemies. Of those ancient civilizations which successively dominated the world, or, at least, that part of which we Westerners have any actual knowledge and which with occidental pride we speak of as The World, what do we know? From the time when Abraham, coming out of the darkness, pitched his tent beneath the oak hard by the long buried City of the Books, down to the time when Goth and Vandal, tutored by the laws and governance of Rome, having learned her gift of organization without appreciation of her Art, poured over her walls and swept away the wonderful treasures to which she had fallen heir when she absorbed Greece within her boundaries—what do we know of these successive civilizations except through the precious fragments of their art?

"Sardanapalus, son of Anacynderaxis, built Sardis and Nineveh in one day and

is now dead." So ran the record of Royal Mortality.

Sardis and Nineveh have passed away and been buried as deep as the long lost ashes of the mighty son of Anacynderaxis, and all that remains of them are a few fragments of their art, a few carven stones and a few character-graven brick and the scant and fragmentary records, scarcely more than traditions, embalmed in the literary art of succeeding civilizations. What knows the world of Egypt but the sculptures on her stones and the architectural remains of her tombs and temples standing upon the margin of the eternal Nile? The link that bound the builders to the pyramids was the work of the artist. Man comes and goes like the lizard of the stones—whither no one knows—and only Nature and Art are eternal.

Greece in her actual form today is only a small peninsula on the edge of the Orient, her name and being maintained because of certain political conditions existing in Europe, but by her art she is even now greater than in her palmyest day when she aspired to rule to the pillars of Hercules.

The modern Athens differs in no wise

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from any modern town of medium size along the bay-indented margin of the Ionian seas; but as one treads her streets or even treads them in imagination, what a sight rises before him! It is "Greece, but living Greece no more"; yet at the name a fairer and more ideal Greece arises than even that where Plato thought, and Pericles governed, and Pindar sang, and Demosthenes thundered against oppression. Turning from the noisy streets of the present Athens, where the dust flies and the sun broils as in any other Southern city, we lift our eyes and there high above us, hanging, as it were, in mid air, is what? Only a ruin upon the Acropolis, but such a ruin! So majestic and inspiring that it belongs not more to those modern Grecians than to you and to me and to all who love Art for its own sake and our own. Sacked and dismantled by Goth and Vandal, by Latin and Saxon; robbed of its wonderful carvings whose smallest fragments are held as the treasures of nations that have risen to power since her votaries beheld before her altars the last "heifer lowing at the skies," the Parthenon is still the temple of all who worship Art; and should we be called upon to point to that city which has done more than any other on the whole round globe to lift life from groveling in the slime and muck of materialism, we should unhesitatingly point to that ancient city of Greece, whose sons, inspired by that divine love of Art, uplifted the world and created a standard which, even in its mutilation, is at once the aspiration and despair of all countries and all generations.

It is said that, when led by her pride and arrogance to destroy her new and virile rival, Syracuse, Athens met her final defeat beneath the walls of Agradina and her captured army was thrown into the Latomia to work in those damp quarries till death should relieve them from their captivity, only those were released who could recite the verses of Euripides. The story still holds good today, and, after all, only those walk in freedom who live in converse with the poets, whether their lines be written upon

paper or graven in stone; the rest still grope in the darkened quarries of materialism. The military and naval power of Greece, once supreme along the Mediterranean, passed as in time must all pomp and power pass, and was succeeded by a power whose military force was so great that Greece had never dreamed even of the countries to which its sway extended. Rome grew to be the unquestioned mistress of the world, not only in the domain of Government, but of Literature and of Art, and as such she carried her laws and her civilization to the extreme limits of the earth, as it was then known, building her mighty structures across Southern Europe and giving to her subject peoples the benefit of her system and her progress and yet more beneficently of her laws, her order and her literature. But at her greatest she only reflected the culture and the knowledge of Art which she got from Greece. Then she, too, passed, and the greatness of her power and the glory of her deeds would have been lost forever but for the work of her artists—the men who built and chiseled and the men who wrote. Over two hundred noble equestrian statues are said to have stood in the public places of Rome when in the year 412 the Goths took possession of her. Of these the only one that remains is the statue of Marcus Aurelius that looks down upon the city in impressive dignity from the Capitoline Hill. And succeeding nations rose, the Frank and the Saxon, the Teuton and the Celt, and absorbed portions of the Art and Culture of Rome, as Rome had absorbed portions of the Art and Culture of Greece, and today we, who are the inheritors of all these, go to Rome, the Eternal City, for what? Not because of her power which she once wielded, of her grandeur which she once displayed, but because of her Art—because in the long galleries of the Capitol and the Vatican are the remains, even fragmentary, of the sculptures of Greece and of Rome, and because her seven hills, on which stand the ruins of great architectural monuments, have been touched with the romance of those other artists who

with the pen have given us imperishable pictures in her imperishable literature.

In the galleries of the Louvre are many of the most precious of the relics of the Greek and the Roman age of glory. Go there and you will find at any hour a throng gazing in rapt and silent admiration, almost in awe, at the broken statue of a woman. Think of a country where art reached so high an eminence that the Venus of Milo and the Victory of Samothrace are spoken of as being works of its decadent age, or, going down further, think of a country in which the Dying Gladiator is referred to as being not in its best period. Then transport yourself in thought from the land of the Athenian and the land of the Roman to the land of the Saxon and to the land of—what are we? Some of my Celtic friends will not allow that we are Saxons, and certainly all of us are not—then to the land of the American, and what do you see? Travel the streets of London, the greatest commercial mart on earth, the capital of that great people from which we sprang and chief city of that great race which has done so much to civilize the world, and gaze upon the monuments which perpetuate the memory of their heroes. No wonder the Frenchman, who visited London after Waterloo, said that France was avenged. In the records of all these countries, and successive civilizations, stands forth one fact, plain and undeniable, that in each successive nation, the Art, however influenced by that which had preceded it, bore the characteristic impress of the spirit of the people from which it sprang. This must, indeed, be so in the nature of life, for Art is but the expression of aspiration, and the original fountains of inspiration must have their sources deep within the life and character of the people.

Thus, as we view the graven records of the history of those lands we find them all eloquent of the character of the peoples they celebrate—power, pride, oppression, tyranny, subservience, sensuality, aspiration are shown there in just the proportion that history has recorded them to have been possessed.

But as we have equalled, or think we have equalled and possibly surpassed, the mother country in our accomplishments, we must not be too modest to admit that we have equalled her in our national monuments. This may not be a popular thing to say, but, in the main, has there ever been in any country such a travesty of Art as that which we have set up as the standard of our national monuments? Go throughout the length and breadth of the land and see for yourselves what the soldiers' monuments in this country are like. One thing may be said in their favor, that they represent an idea and they express a sentiment, but how frightfully do they express it! In architecture we have done better, but if a hundred years ago Thomas Jefferson inveighed with hot words against an architecture which looked as though the genius of Malevolence had spread his works over the land in the hideous architecture which disgraced us, what would he have thought of the depths to which we had fallen a century later!

I have been at some pains at times to try and find for myself a satisfactory solution of this unhappy situation, and I think it is due to the fact that the spirit of our people is essentially non-artistic; that in the first place, spread abroad over a great expanse of territory, driven always by the exaction of conquering a new world in every sense, our ventures have been almost exclusively in the direction of the practical work which life under these new and hard conditions has ever presented and that the artistic sense has suffered in consequence.

Reflection is necessary for the awakening of the sense of Beauty. Pan's pipes are heard only in the vale or on the hillside, far from the rush and roar of strife, commercial or militant. To produce Art there must be Art in the atmosphere, but we have it not.

There is, however, a graver and a far less honorable reason than this: our commercialism—the sad fact that our people and, gradually, our national character have become steeped in the soul-destroying caldron of commercialism. The exactions of the struggle for supremacy

over the vast wild of the continent was a natural and not ignoble reason for the sacrifice of Art. The men who bore the standard across the continent had much that was heroic in their mold. But they took with them the household gods of the homes they had left, and did not forget their ideals even when the forest and the furrow swallowed up their energies.

But in this later time the heroic has well-nigh wholly vanished and our energies are engrossed and exhausted in the struggle for sheer money, and still for money—not for its power to purchase, but merely for the miser's taste of possession or the spendthrift's gift of squandering.

Our government, that is, our representatives, that is, we, the people of these United States, for many years barred the door against Art and refused to let Art in. What think you will be thought in future years of a people who placed a penalty upon the introduction of Art? I know that they said that this was a tariff upon a luxury, and it is true that Art may be called a luxury and is a luxury in America, for we have made it so, but the injury resulting from this method of barring Art out was not to the wealthy, who could go to Europe and enjoy it, or have it if they pleased in their own homes, but to the poor, and there is no country on earth where the poor are so shut out from the uplifting contact with Art as in America. The artist does not want "protection." He wants Art made as free as the air, for it is in the atmosphere surcharged with Art that Art flourishes.

The result of our policy is that those of our untrained artists who have not the good fortune to be possessed of means to study Art, turn to other professions to which they are as unsuited as a bird caged in a barnyard, while those who may chance to be more happily circumstanced are driven abroad to learn their Art and receive during the plastic period of youth the impression of a foreign Art from which they rarely emancipate themselves.

The question is why do we tolerate the

barbarity of putting a penalty on the introduction of works of Art at all? And when the future writer of the history of this country shall come across the fact that we for long years had a penalty upon the introduction of works of Art, he will need no other evidence to establish in his own mind the conviction that, whatever our virtues as a people may have been, we were still far from being completely civilized.

Yet, notwithstanding this barbarous and foolish imposition on Art, the artistic sense of our people is steadily growing.

Should we begin with literature, however, I am unable to give much encouragement to our patriotic pride. Neither in Poetry, Fiction, History or the Drama have we of late years taken a position to which we may point with pride. Our best men in all these departments of literature, except History alone, belonged to a past generation, and the best we have now are only respectable. How far the responsibility for this is to be charged to lack of genius and how far to the soul-subduing canker of commercialism I shall leave to others to say.

I believe the time will come as surely as we are here today when the American people will develop a great artistic sense. When the American people develop a sense they generally put it into operation, for they are a practical people as well as an idealistic people. And when the people shall feel this artistic influence—when men's hearts shall respond to the higher call of Art as they are already doing, the American people will see to it that Art is no longer banned and barred from this country—that Art shall have here a new land in which to expand as liberty has had. Then Art shall have the opportunity to perform her proper function to lift the people of this country from the slough of commercialism, into which we have to some extent sunk, into that high region where man shall, with his face to heaven, advance along the lines which God has opened for him, and progress with heart and intellect, and with imagination.